



MDCPS COVID-19 Response

Exhibit H

updates for our Child Welfare Partners

Tuesday, March 17, 2020

CONTINUATION OF OPERATIONS PLAN

Beginning at 8 a.m. on Wednesday, March 18, 2020, the MDCPS State Office at 750 North State Street in Jackson will be closed to general public access. Many of our essential employees will begin telework at that point while others, who cannot perform their work responsibilities away from the physical office, will continue to report to the State Office building. Other staff, whose responsibilities have been designated as non-essential, will be placed on Administrative Leave until further notice.

All MDCPS County Offices were closed, effective 8 a.m. on Tuesday, May 17, 2020. Field Operations frontline workers, supervisors, adoption and licensure staff will telework during this indefinite period of time. Recruitment and licensure of new foster homes will be temporarily suspended but licensure of expedited (relative) foster homes will continue without interruption. All services to foster families and in-home cases will be maintained.

MDCPS is committed to providing uninterrupted services and supports to our clients and will continue our investigations, ongoing services to foster children and the families caring for them, in-home support cases and maintaining our efforts to provide rapid permanency for children in care through reunification and adoption. We are also restructuring our work to be able to continue to achieve compliance with standards set forth in the Olivia Y federal court order as well as performance and reporting requirements of the Children's Bureau.

During this COVID-19 response period, MDCPS will maintain -- without interruption or reduction in service -- the 24-hour hotline for reporting suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation. The 800-222-8000 will be staffed around the clock and investigations will continue to be initiated on time. Reports may also be made via the agency's website: www.mdcps.ms.gov and on mobile phone apps.

We have instructed our field operations staff to maintain regular contact with all children and families on their caseloads. Prior to making face-to-face, in-home visits with foster children, staff have been instructed to telephone the foster family and complete a safety checklist to avoid unnecessary exposure to the COVID-19 virus. (A copy of these guidelines is attached to this email.)

STAKEHOLDER AND CLIENT COMMUNICATIONS

MDCPS leadership will communicate daily (or, as needed) with all foster parents, state office and field operations staff, child welfare partners and court officials through email newsletters and, when necessary, via direct texts and phone calls. Updates will also be posted to the agency's multiple Facebook pages and to our agency website's homepage.

- For clients needing assistance resolving issues with foster care or in-home cases or issues with MDCPS, emails may be sent to: ConsumerSolutions@mdcps.ms.gov.
- For foster parents, our foster parent liaison will be available to assist individuals who are unable to resolve issues with their caseworker/supervisor: Thomas.Dent@mdcps.ms.gov
- For reports of suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation, the Mississippi Centralized Intake reporting hotline can be reached by calling: 1-800-222-8000. Reports may also be made via the website: www.mdcps.ms.gov or by using our mobile apps for iPhones and Androids.
- For adoption issues or to inquire about children in our Heart Gallery, the hotline is: 1-800-821-9157
- For individuals interested in becoming foster parents, an online application is available on the agency website. Recruitment and licensure of new homes is temporarily suspended during this COVID-19 response period but licensure of expedited (relative) foster homes will continue without interruption.